

POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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ments of the Liberal Cabinet during the memorable days which ended his public career.

Three works stand out from the multitude of apologies

produced in England by the first world war. The ample

narratives of Winston Churchill and Lloyd George resemble

each other in their tingling vitality, their colossal self-assurance,

their robust conviction that the mistakes which nearly lost us

the war were made by other men, their unconcealed contempt

for slower minds and weaker wills. No one can read their

testimony without realising that the writers are born leaders,

unlike Asquith or Grey among their political colleagues, unlike

Balfour and Bonar Law, MacDonald and Baldwin in the rival

camps. But men of action who, as the phrase goes, can deliver

the goods, sometimes supply the wrong kind of article. No

one nowadays contests the services to the cause of the Allies

rendered by the two most dynamic personalities in British

politics, and no one will deny the narrative and argumentative

power with which they have conducted their defence. Yet such

boom fighters do not always silence their critics.

Churchill's literary virtuosity was revealed in youth by his

sparkling life of his father, and *The World Crisis* is full of purple

patches, some of them rising into magnificent eloquence ; but

Lloyd George's skill with the pen came as a surprise. We had

all wondered who would be entrusted with the responsibility

of presenting his case. The answer 'was given by the changes

and chances of domestic politics ; his fall from power decided

that, despite his lack of literary training, he should tell his own

story. ^{ec} I was the only official figure who went right through

it from the declaration of war to the signing of peace. I make my

contribution, not as one who claims to be an experienced

author, but as a witness giving evidence on what

he remembers
of these tremendous transactions.**

His book, he claims with justice, is the most
carefully and
richly documented account of the great
Armageddon.

The
self-righteousness which mars nearly all
apologias is conspicuous
ous in the six volumes of his *War Memoirs*. Grey,
Asquith,

Haig, Robertson, Jellicoe and many other
prominent actors

are mercilessly trounced, but quite as many,
French as well as

British, are warmly praised. There are no half-
tones, hesita-

tions or doubts, though he reminds us that
chance, not right,

is the supreme judge in war. We are reminded of
Melbourne's

remark: " I wish I was as cocksure about
anything as

Macaulay is about everything.** Yet the power
is unmis-